

WILDLIFE WARRIORS

The Village Wildlife Volunteers Programme

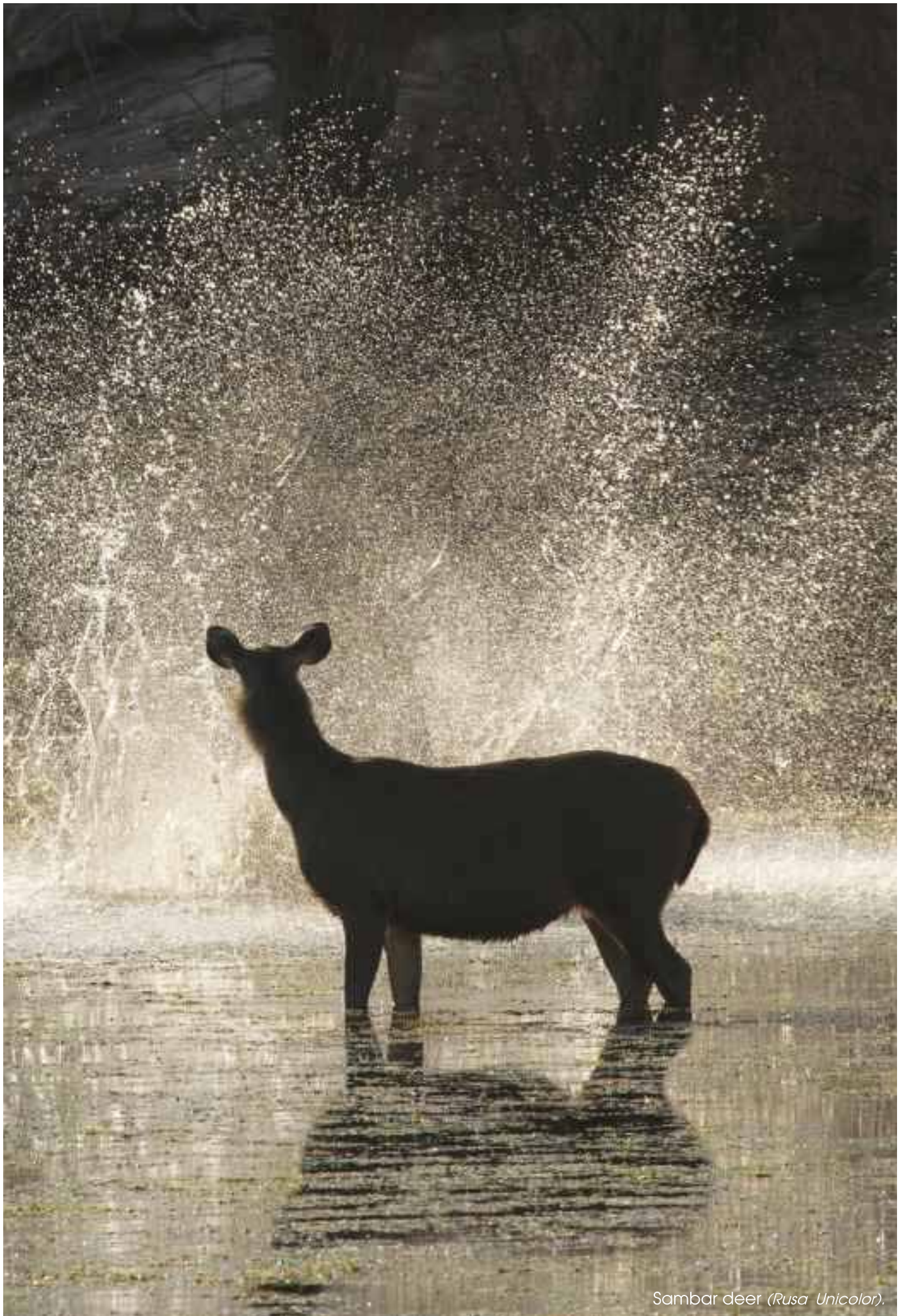


A New Approach
to Wildlife Conservation



Forest Department
Rajasthan, India





Sambar deer (*Rusa Unicolor*).

WILDLIFE WARRIORS

The Village Wildlife Volunteers Programme
(A New Approach to Wildlife Conservation)
2013-18



Tiger Watch



**Forest Department
Rajasthan, India**

Compiled By:
ISHAN DHAR
MEENU DHAKAD



Crested bunting (*Melophus lathami*)

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DISCLAIMER

To ensure minimal disturbance, we felt it prudent to not provide the exact locations of the majority of our camera trap sites.





VASUNDHARA RAJE
CHIEF MINISTER, RAJASTHAN



Foreword

In 2015, I was on tour of the Sawai Madhopur district. As a part of seeing for myself innovations by the local administration, I visited the Village Wildlife Volunteers Program. What I found most interesting was the enthusiasm and energy of young people, who might not be very highly educated but had tremendous commitment to the cause of conservation. They did not hesitate to show me on their phones, images they had captured of Tigers that had strayed far beyond the boundaries of Ranthambhor Tiger Reserve and even into Madhya Pradesh.

This modest yet vital operation goes a long way in securing the future of the Ranthambhor landscape. It is an example of how indigenous knowledge of local geography and demography and building of capacities have come together to create a volunteer force that looks out for the welfare of Tigers and other wild animals. Not only do they track movement of animals outside the reserve but also come up with useful intelligence about movement of miscreants and incidents of man-animal conflict. This model is worthy of replication.

This publication 'Wildlife Warriors' is not only about these unsung heroes but also a practical manual on how this program has been operationalized and is yielding rich dividends. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Village Wildlife Volunteer Program and the Park Management for working together for a common cause and coming up with sterling results. I am sure, this publication shall act as an inspiration to Park Managers elsewhere who shall try adapting this program to their local conditions.

(Vasundhara Raje)

CHIEF MINISTER'S VISIT

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan Ms. Vasundhara Raje inspected the Village Wildlife Volunteers on July 30th, 2015. The Volunteers got the rare opportunity to present and showcase their work to the Hon'ble Chief Minister themselves and they rose to the occasion! Resulting in an in depth and detailed 30 minute discussion, Smt Raje was impressed by the Program and complimented the dedication of the team as well the concept.







A young Tiger in Ranthambhore National Park right after the monsoon.

INTRODUCTION

This book is truly inspirational. It answers the question frequently asked, What can we do to save our diminishing wildlife? I have spent 42 years serving India's tigers and her beleaguered wildlife. What Dr Dharmendra Khandal with help from Mr Y K Sahu, Field Director, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve have created is truly unique, not just in India but across the world. This is the first practical intervention that engages local communities in both protecting and monitoring the wildlife around them. For decades some of us dreamt of the day when this would be possible. Dr Dharmendra Khandal has made this a reality.

Today, 50 Village Wildlife Volunteers criss-cross the edges of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve monitoring at least 20 per cent of the peripheral Tigers and provide vital intelligence about illegal activities including poaching. At the time of writing, this team is about to be doubled to 60. Every morning, by 9am the information on all wildlife in the corridor areas is transmitted to the park director's office. With smart phones and camera traps, this army of locals has become the most important and strategic partner of the Forest Department. This group of youngsters get a small stipend each month but continue with their normal activities in the villages. Some of them now have motorcycles to widen their area of impact. Who said that local communities can not become wildlife warriors?

I believe that through the detail of this book, which reveals the enormous information that has been collected by the Village Wildlife Volunteers, this intervention will get replicated not just in india but across the world. this is how we can secure the future of our wilderness across our planet. it is the story of both hope and success.



Valmik Thapar

India's foremost Tiger expert

FIELD DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Y. K. Sahu

Chief Conservator of Forest
Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve

Some institutions are neither conceived nor created by design, but are the consequence of a set of chance happenings. More often than not such institutions survive the test of time and make significant contributions to the society. The Village Wildlife Volunteer Program of Ranthambhore is one such fine example.

In hindsight I recall, it was in January, 2013 when in my office, I sat looking at a message sent by a resident of village Bherna to the local forest guard that he had seen the pug marks of a tiger, near the village. In the vicinity of a tiger reserve such information is common. But this particular village was located twelve kilometers from the reserve and the evidence of tiger movement indicated the possibility of a tiger on the migration path.

While I was contemplating further action on the information, Dr. Dharmendra Khandal of Tiger Watch, happened to come to meet me and that set the ball rolling for what eventually became this program. We got discussing the importance of this information and decided to track this tiger. A team comprising of a local forest guard and two village youth who had some experience of wildlife tracking was constituted. After a quick training for tracking straying tigers the team departed on their mission.

Soon the migrating tiger crossed river Chambal and entered into the adjoining state of Madhya Pradesh. Since it was difficult for a regular forest employee to move out of the state, the village youth continued the tracking. The moving tiger would make kills, eat what it could, abandon the leftovers and then move on, the duo reported. The tiger crossed the forests of Palpur Kuno Sanctuary and reached the forests of Datia.

For fifty-one days the village youth tracked this tiger based only on its pug mark trail and fixing camera traps for over 250 Km. Initially for 50 days the camera traps did not capture the elusive animal. But on the 51st day at a water hole in the forests of Datia in Madhya Pradesh, the camera trap captured the tiger's photograph. The animal was identified as the grown up male cub of T26 (mother) who lived on the Indala plateau in Ranthambhore. It was a remarkable achievement in the field of Tiger Monitoring. With minimal use of technology but with a lot of grit and determination these village boys were able to successfully track the migration of a young male tiger across two states. The leader of this team of two was Shri Hanuman Gurjar.



It was then that recognizing the potential of such volunteers in wildlife conservation the Department and Tiger Watch got together to institutionalize the endeavour into a full-fledged program and named it the 'Village Wildlife Volunteer' Program. Today there are thirty VWVs spread in strategically located villages.

The VWV Program runs on the concept that a villager continues to carry on the occupation which he was earlier engaged in for his livelihood. But on the sidelines, he volunteers for wildlife conservation work mostly around the village where he lives.

To add value to the program, the forest department then trained the interested volunteers for tracking wild animals, use of camera traps, use of modern communication techniques using smartphones and most importantly prompt action required to be taken in case of a human-wildlife conflict. To keep their interest alive and also to improve their livelihood the volunteers are given a monthly honorarium ranging from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 10,000 per month depending upon their experience, zeal and skill.

The program is running into its 5th year and the results are very encouraging. The amount of information generated by the VWVs is phenomenal and it has on the other hand managed to involve local villagers in conservation effort besides giving them an additional source of income. However, building up a network of volunteers is not an easy task. It takes a lot of time and effort to identify dedicated and zealous village youth with the right inclination.

Another unique feature of this program is its funding. For five years the program has run without any support from the government. So far it is supported by donors from the tourism industry like Sujana Luxury Travels and Tour Operators for Tigers (TOFT). This is a strong example of how the tourism industry can genuinely chip in for wildlife conservation.

The support of local communities in wildlife conservation is well recognized. The Village Wildlife Volunteer Program is an active and direct involvement of committed local youth in wildlife conservation. Looking at the success of the program the State Government has decided to support it financially.



Caracal caracal - An extremely rare cat species.

THE VILLAGE WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME



VWV installing Camera Trap

THE VILLAGE WILDLIFE VOLUNTEER

Each series of camera trap photographs draws ones attention to the roles that the Village Wildlife Volunteers play in the field, whether it is monitoring Tigers and other Wildlife as well as protecting the same from threats like poachers. These photographs are also an accurate reflection of the surprisingly vast biodiversity of the corridor areas. They also serve as consistent reminders of the fact that these landscapes are human dominated and that a very fragile balance exists between man and animal here.

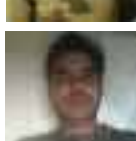
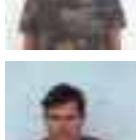


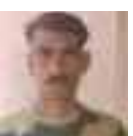
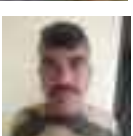
CCF Mr YK Sahu training volunteers.

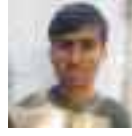
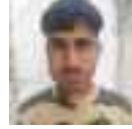
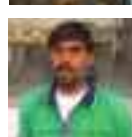
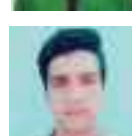
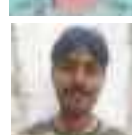
At the moment, there are 50 Village Wildlife Volunteers.

The information transmitted by them is indexed by 7 coordinators selected from the group, who report directly to Tiger Watch on a daily basis.

Village Wildlife Volunteer Profiles

1		Name: Hanuman Gurjar Father's Name: DeviLal Gurjar Village: Bangarda Kalan	13		Name: Sonarayan Gurjar Father's Name: Morpal Gurjar Village: Mojipura
2		Name: Naresh Gurjar Father's Name: PrabhuLal Gurjar Village: Sawta	14		Name: AshaRam Gurjar Father's Name: LadduLal Gurjar Village: Rawanjhna Doongar
3		Name: Keshav Saini Father's Name: Mohan Lal Mali Village: Sherpur	15		Name: BhooraLal Gurjar Father's Name: RadheLal Gurjar Village: Kalibhat
4		Name: Harisingh Gurjar Father's Name: Ramniwas Gurjar Village: Bairna	16		Name: Hukum Chand Gurjar Father's Name: Birpal Gurjar Village: Nimli Kalan
5		Name: Roopchand Berwa Father's Name: Gyarasa Berwa Village: Govindpura	17		Name: Vijay singh Gurjar Father's Name: Jagdish Gurjar Village: Bhairapura
6		Name: Harimohan Gurjar Father's Name: Ramkrishan Gurjar Village: Guwadi	18		Name: ChetRam Meena Father's Name: Ramphool Meena Village: Monpura
7		Name: Ghanshyam Gurjar Father's Name: Badrilal Gurjar Village: Dangarwada	19		Name: Ghanshyam Mahavar Father's Name: BadriLal Mahavar Village: Doongri
8		Name: BacchRaj Gurjar Father's Name: BadriLal Gurjar Village: Aamli	20		Name: HariVallabh Meena Father's Name: Jairam Meena Village: Enda
9		Name: Ramkesh Gurjar Father's Name: KalyanMal Gurjar Village: Mallapur	21		Name: Forkesh Meena Father's Name: Prathvi Raj Meena Village: Khandoj
10		Name: Balmukund Gurjar Father's Name: Hanuman Gurjar Village: Mundra Heri	22		Name: Radhe Shyam Mali Father's Name: Jansi Mali Village: Kheda
11		Name: Ramsingh Gurjar Father's Name: Hanuman Gurjar Village: Jalpa Kheri	23		Name: Dharm Singh Gurjar Father's Name: Laxman Singh Gurjar Village: Badhlao
12		Name: Dharamsingh Gurjar Father's Name: LaxmiNarayan Gurjar Village: Anandipura	24		Name: Hansraj Gurjar Father's Name: Shankar Lal Gurjar Village: Khirkda

- 25  Name: Bhaagchand Meena
Father's Name: Ramniwas Meena
Village: Baso Kalan
- 26  Name: Mangilal Gurjar
Father's Name: Ramkunwar Gurjar
Village: Krishanpura
- 27  Name: RamSingh Meena
Father's Name: SitaRam Meena
Village: Pator
- 28  Name: Bihari Singh
Father's Name: Bhadur Singh
Village: Jakhoda
- 29  Name: Bhoora Gurjar
Father's Name: Phool Singh Gurjar
Village: Bairet
- 30  Name: Meetha Lal Gurjar
Father's Name: Bhavar Lal Gurjar
Village: Firojpur
- 31  Name: Shivkumar Meena
Father's Name: Buddu Meena
Village: Nidar
- 32  Name: Bholu Gurjar
Father's Name: Fulya Gurjar
Village: Balapura
- 33  Name: Ramesh Gurjar
Father's Name: Ramshay Gurjar
Village: Talda
- 34  Name: Kamal Gurjar
Father's Name: Bacchu Singh Gurjar
Village: Devpura
- 35  Name: RamBhajan Gurjar
Father's Name: RamCharan Gurjar
Village: Naypur
- 36  Name: Harikesh Gurjar
Father's Name: PrabhuLal Gurjar
Village: Sawta
- 37  Name: Ramswaroop Jaga
Father's Name: Ramratan Jaga
Village: Bajoli

- 38  Name: Ramkesh Gurjar
Father's Name: Laddu Lal Gurjar
Village: Talawada
- 39  Name: Keshav Gurjar
Father's Name: Siyaram Gurjar
Village: Khandar
- 40  Name: Raghuveer Gurjar
Father's Name: Fulya Gurjar
Village: Gopalpura
- 41  Name: Ramsingh Gurjar
Father's Name: Kaduram Gurjar
Village: Bairna
- 42  Name: Ramshay Gurjar
Father's Name: Dhanji Lal Gurjar
Village: Chhan
- 43  Name: Roopsingh Gurjar
Father's Name: Ramshay Gurjar
Village: Maharo
- 44  Name: Lakhan Gurjar
Father's Name: Prabhu Lal Gurjar
Village: Nibhera
- 45  Name: Battilal Gurjar
Father's Name: Badri Gurjar
Village: Sakda
- 46  Name: Omprakash Gurjar
Father's Name: Bajrang Lal Gurjar
Village: Mai Khurd
- 47  Name: Ramlal Mali
Father's Name: Lalu Lal Mali
Village: Sanwas
- 48  Name: Pradeep Singh
Father's Name: Brijraj Singh
Village: Khoh
- 49  Name: Girraj Gurjar
Father's Name: Madanlal Gurjar
Village: Prsipura
- 50  Name: Dharmsingh Gurjar
Father's Name:
Village: Maharo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have played a significant role in the Village Wildlife Volunteer Story. First and foremost, we would like to thank the Honourable Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Smt. Vasundhara Raje for her blessings and support.

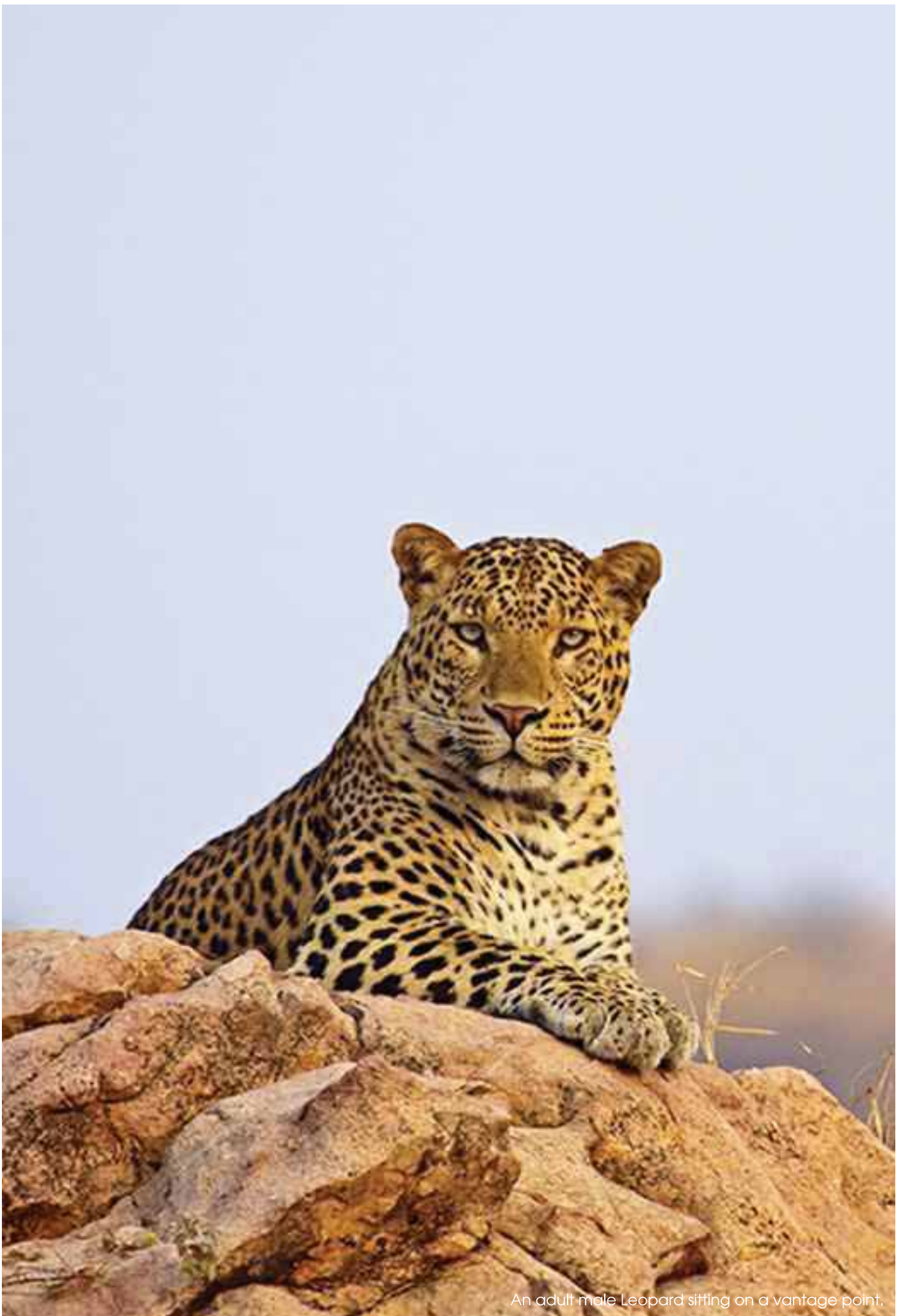
The program would not have been possible without the consistent leadership and direction of Dr. Dharmendra Khandal and Mr Y.K. Sahu. Mr. Valmik Thapar has been a source of inspiration, guidance, vocal support and has also on occasion, been an insightful critic. Ms Meenu Dhakad, who started out as an intern at Tiger Watch but is now a full time employee, has also played a significant role when it comes to a lot of coordination behind the scenes and has only just begun to play more of a leadership role in the program.

We would also like to thank Julian Matthews and TOF Tigers India & Nepal, who were the first to get behind the program, closely followed by Jaisal and Anjali Singh of Sujan Luxury Travels, who made it financially possible for the program to expand into the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary. Subhro Bhattacharya was also an early and consistent supporter of the program. Others to have followed suit are Mr Anshuman Jain, Mr Vidya Chander, the late Mr John Singh, Mr Iskander Laljee, Mr Nithin Nagraj, Ms Aritra Banerjee, Ms Tapati Bhattacharya, Mr Supatrik Mitra, Mr Rahul Khosla of Max Healthcare, Mr Shirang Purohit, Mr Yuvraj Narain of D.P. World, Ms Meghna & Mr Ambrish Wadekar, Mr Arjun Gupta, Mr Aditya Singh of the Ranthambore Bagh, Mrs Nancy Zubin Mehta, Mr Ashok Bahadur, Mr Abhinav Dhar and Mr Varun Sharma of Jump USA. We are eternally grateful for the support the program has received and continues to receive.

Following the example of Mr Sahu, there have been many in the Forest Department who have helped the program grow to where it is today. The Department is one of the pillars of the program thanks to many current and former officers. In this regard we would like to thank Mr Sudarshan Sharma, Mr Upendra Mishra, Mr Bijo Joy, Mr Daulat Singh Shaktawat, Mr R.S. Kala, Dr Subhadeep Bhattacharjee and Mr Ram Lal Gurjar. There aren't many successful public-private partnerships in this country, and we look forward to many more years of cooperation.

We would also like to thank Dr. Ullas Karanth for his input on Honey Badgers in this book.

We regret any names not mentioned unintentionally.



An adult male Leopard sitting on a vantage point.



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10, 11 (Centre), 88

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*This was a tremendous undertaking &
we apologize for any unintentional error.*



Great Thicknee at Rajbagh lake.



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